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Plain Honesty: Wallace Short and the I.W.W.

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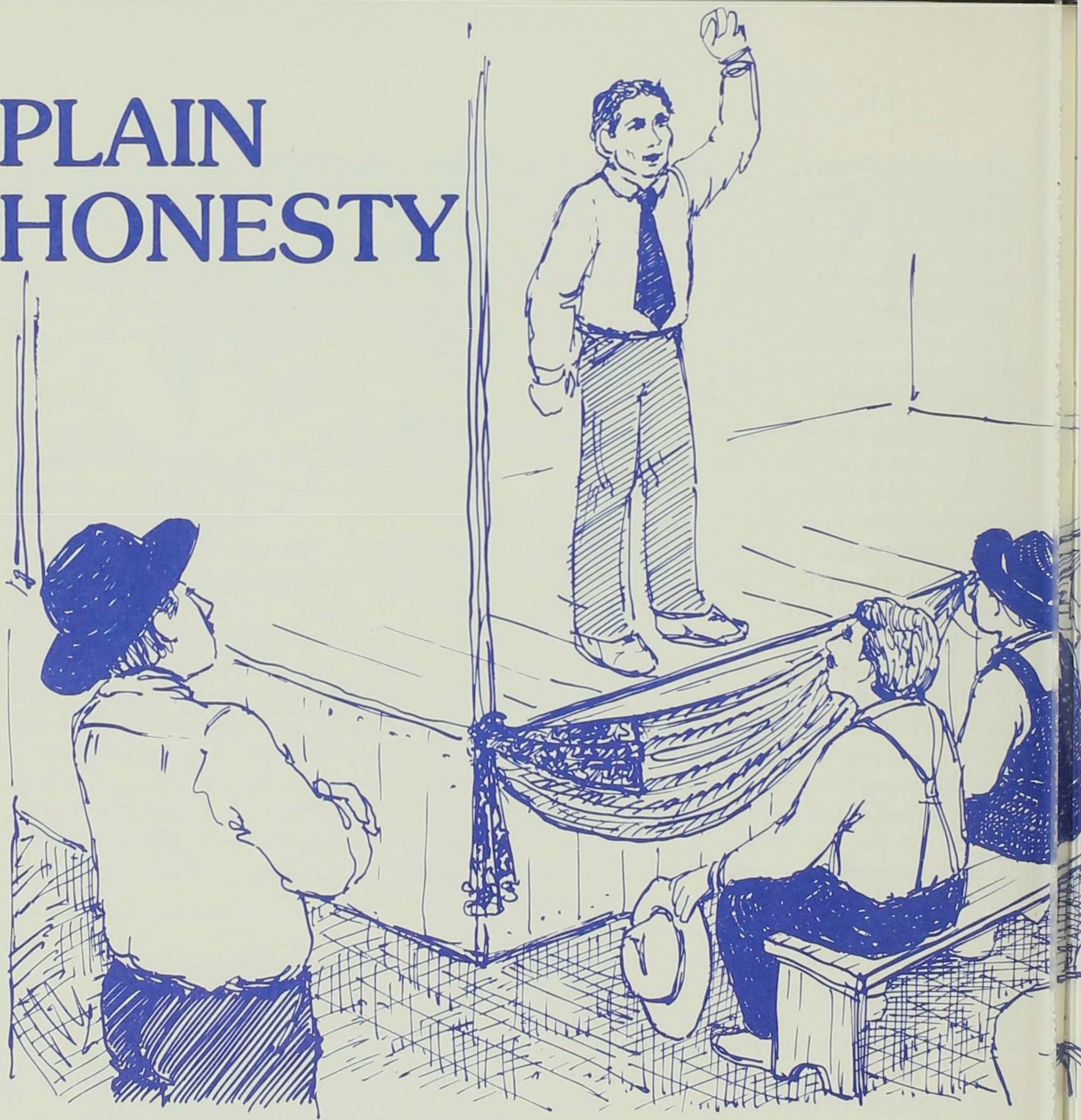
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PLAIN HONESTY



WALLACE SHORT AND THE

The United States did not enter World War I with the whole-hearted support of all elements of the citizenry. In fact, the turmoil of early twentieth-century America, newly urbanized, full of recent immigrants, and seething with new social theories and political

philosophies, sharpened to outright conflict time and time again, in Montana as well as Pittsburgh, in Iowa as well as New York. Everywhere, super-patriots turned wrathfully against anyone whose loyalty they questioned: speakers of German, labor organizers, newly arrived Jews and Italians.

At the center of one such storm was Wallace



THE I.W.W. by William H. Cumberland

M. Short, the mayor of Sioux City, who received state and national attention by defending the free speech rights of the Industrial Workers of the World, commonly known as the Wobblies. He was subject to continual personal attacks in the Sioux City and regional press, and was forced, in June 1919, to submit to a recall election.

Mayor Short came from the small town of College Springs, near the Iowa-Missouri border. His father, James Black Short, had been an opponent of slavery, a supporter of Abraham Lincoln, and a Civil War veteran. Born in 1866, Wallace Short labored on the family farm until he was twenty-one, attending a local academy known as Amity College. In 1889, he left for

Beloit College and four years later graduated as class valedictorian. Intent upon becoming a minister, he pursued his studies at Yale Seminary. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1896.

During his first pastorate in Evansville, Wisconsin, Short grew interested in the social gospel theology of Washington Gladden, and he was also caught up in the progressive movement led by Wisconsin politician Robert M. La Follette. These influences were to remain paramount, sustaining Short's dedication to the cause of social justice and the problems of the working-man and the farmer in particular. In Kansas City, Missouri, he was the chaplain of the local trades and labor assembly, and an honorary member of the bartender's union. After serving the Beacon Hill parish in Kansas City for seven years, he accepted the pastorate of Sioux City's First Congregational Church in May 1910.

During this period, prohibition was gaining widespread support and the Anti-Saloon League developing into a powerful national lobbying group. Short's disapproval of the methods employed by the League and other prohibitionists was evident by the time he left his Evansville pastorate in 1903 and quite pronounced when he arrived in Sioux City. His opposition to prohibition enforced by law eventually created a stir in the Sioux City congregation. When, in May 1914, he refused to support the prohibitionist drive in Sioux City and had the audacity to sign the consent petition for a saloon, Short aroused the opposition of the local clergy as well as that of influential members of his First Church congregation—and soon lost his pastorate. Ultimately, he was ousted from the Sioux City Ministerial Association.

If his enemies thought he would leave town, they were mistaken, for in September 1914 Wallace M. Short established Central Church as an independent congregation. Services were held first in the Grand Theater and later in the Plaza. Some of his loyal parishioners followed

him from First Church, while others seeking a liberal message also found a home in the doctrinally free Central Church. About 300 gathered to hear his inaugural sermon on September 6, 1914. From the new pulpit, Short expounded not only his views on the temperance question but upon issues which he felt contained the real substance of religious faith. The church was able to survive financially, meet all its obligations, and still pay the minister's salary. Short optimistically wrote his brother that he was suffering no economic loss as a result of having lost his pastorate at First Church.

The independent organization of Central Church allowed him to focus his concern on social justice. On Christmas Eve 1914, he visited the city's relief agencies hoping to console the poor. His itinerary took him to Socialist Hall where he found 125 men "waiting for the stew that was to be their dinner." A conversation with one of them—a member of the Industrial Workers of the World—gave Short the impression that this man knew more than anyone else in the city about what "hungry men are getting to eat."

The Industrial Workers of the World, popularly known as the Wobblies, represented the radical left wing of the American labor movement during the Progressive Era. Organized in 1905 among western miners, lumberjacks, and other laborers, the I.W.W.'s alleged influence always exceeded its actual power. Nationwide, its membership never amounted to more than a hundred thousand workers, but the fiery pronouncements of the Wobblies' leaders, such as William "Big Bill" Haywood, inspired fear among the captains of American industry. And no wonder: the Wobblies proposed the violent takeover of industry by workers' unions. However, most Wobblies considered themselves Anarcho-Syndicalists, not Bolsheviks or communists.

In the fall of 1914, an influx of I.W.W. members into Sioux City created near-panic by increasing the already large number of unemployed, coming in from the harvest fields of the West hoping to find piecework and odd jobs during the winter months. Because the I.W.W. represented an extremist position within the labor movement, their presence was resented by union labor as well as by the business community. Recent studies have shown the non-violent nature of the Wobblies, but their vigorous anti-capitalist rhetoric and migratory habits convinced many communities that they were a threat to law and order. In spite of Sioux City's welcome to the organization—a ban on meetings and speeches, arrests and threats of jail or prison terms—the town served as a temporary haven for the I.W.W. The local jail was soon filled with Wobblies, who called attention to their plight and the conditions of the jail by refusing to break rock or eat and by burning their vermin-infested clothing.

Short, now the independent pastor of Central Church, wrote an article about Sioux City's experience with the I.W.W. that was published in the October 1915 issue of *Survey* magazine, in which he advocated tolerance in dealing with the I.W.W. intruders. He noted that when Sioux City authorities stopped the arrests and released the prisoners, the Wobblies soon filtered out of town.

Short's fascination with the I.W.W. persisted, and on November 25, 1917, he invited members of the organization to attend services at Central Church, where the sermon topic was to be "What Is and What Ought to Be." Anonymous threats against the theater where services were held led to the cancellation of church that Sunday. Undaunted by this, Short reissued the invitation the following week and this time preached the sermon with a number of Wobblies present in the congregation. War-time fear of radicals was already much in evidence, and Short remarked that he did not



Wallace Short (courtesy Mrs. Robert Hunter)

suppose his sermon would "render vigilante committees unnecessary," but if Christianity and Democracy were really the ruling motives in America, "no one would ever dream of naming fear as the ruler of our destiny when our day of testing is at hand." He hoped everyone now knew that the minister of Central Church "will go freely to any soul."

There was already discussion in labor circles that Short would make a desirable candidate for mayor. Encouraged by such overtures, Short announced on January 3, 1918 that he would enter the campaign. He assailed Sioux City's "invisible government" and pledged an administration of plain honesty. The *Sioux City Journal* predicted correctly that union men would

endorse Short when their convention met the following week.

Labor's endorsement of Wallace Short sent tremors through the ranks of Sioux City's traditional governing elite. The labor platform pledged open government, a beautification program beneficial to all, economy, honesty, justice and "the golden rule for every man, woman, and child whether he be worth a dollar or a million." Short's decision to enter municipal politics was influenced by progressives like Sam Jones of Toledo and Tom Johnson of Cleveland and by the social gospel message of his idol, Washington Gladden. He was supported by a large working-class population.

Short's opponents fought back with a Citizen's Ticket which they claimed had the support of the business community and the "better elements." Short, whose sermons had once been printed by the daily press, now found himself heading a political ticket labeled "demagogues and adventurers parading as representatives of the labor cause." Short, said the *Journal*, was neither laborer nor businessman. He was merely an unsuccessful minister. Incumbent Mayor R.J. Andrews could not believe that the people of Sioux City would be willing to turn city hall over to the Wobblies and "American Bolsheviks." Mayor Andrews charged that when Short preached before the I.W.W. on November 25, he delivered a different sermon than the one originally prepared. Had Short given his original sermon, the mayor claimed, he "would now be in the custody of the United States government." A victory for Short would put a friend of the I.W.W. "on the throne in Sioux City." The mayor felt the people of Sioux City knew the "true feelings of this impractical, dreaming demagogue." Andrews made every effort to capitalize upon his opponent's alleged sympathies for the I.W.W., his lack of political experience, and the need for the continuation

in office of a competent business administration.

The *Sioux City Journal*, the *Tribune*, and the regional press attacked Short's candidacy without mercy. John Kelly, editor of the *Tribune* and once a member of Short's First Church congregation, was frenetic in his opposition, declaring that the candidate's sole labor affiliation was with the bartenders' union, and that he openly sympathized with the I.W.W. Short was contemptuously called the "archangel of booze" who had the same principles as the Kaiser. Short's successor at the First Congregation Church, the Rev. Mr. C.E. Tower, proclaimed that Jesus Christ "contradicts the labor candidate in principles, in ideals, and in purpose." Tower found his predecessor to be an "inexperienced and dangerous leader." Most of the clergy, however, simply urged their parishioners to vote. The vehemence of the opposition could not prevent a labor victory, and Short along with three other members of the labor ticket breezed through the primaries and the final election in March 1918.

The tragic collapse of Sioux City's Ruff Building on June 29—resulting in the death of forty people—exposed difficulties in the new administration almost immediately. Short was charged with having appointed an unqualified building inspector, E.J. O'Connor, in order to pay a political debt. O'Connor, a local labor leader, had been unable to satisfy the full city council of his qualifications, but was serving as inspector until the issue could be settled. In addition, the Commissioner of Public Safety, W.R. Hamilton, voted in on the same ticket as Short, came under a cloud and was removed from office for drunkenness, maladministration, and corruption in office. Although Short had threatened to remove Hamilton almost a month before the tragedy, Hamilton's antics tainted the mayor's administration, especially in the eyes of the *Sioux City Journal*.



Downtown Sioux City in the 1910s (SHSI)

His counter-charges that the city's fire-traps benefited only their owners did little to counter-balance the insinuations of his enemies.

During the same period, the mayor went to Chicago where he testified on behalf of more than one hundred Wobblies charged with violation of the government's Espionage Act. Reports circulated back to Sioux City claiming that Mayor Short described the Wobblies as good citizens of the "highest character." The cross examination of Short was conducted by Claude R. Porter, a Centerville Democrat, who hoped to become governor of Iowa. Short's testimony concerned the free speech fight of the I. W. W. in Sioux City during 1914-1915. Mayor Short pointed out that Sioux City had no ordinance against street speaking and that the Wobblies had not advocated violence

or "otherwise conducted themselves in a manner not in accord with his sense of decency and good citizenship." Short blamed the Chamber of Commerce for the trouble with the I. W. W. in Sioux City because the chamber "used chicanery to oust the I. W. W. from the hall they had leased." Short testified that in spite of the efforts of his political opponents to connect him with the I. W. W., he had won the mayoralty by a large margin.

That the mayor had gone to Chicago to testify on behalf of the Wobblies inspired a large outcry in Sioux City. The worst possible interpretation was placed on this action by his political enemies. The commissioner of public safety, already under fire for misconduct, proclaimed that Short's testimony might bring an influx of Wobblies into the city. If so, Hamilton announced he would be "out in the street with

[his] hat and coat off and ready to fight.”

The pastor of the First Presbyterian Church characterized Short's performance as another illustration of the mayor's "crooked thinking." The Trades and Labor Assembly appeared ready to change its views about the mayor, and Councilman Henry Michelstetter, a long-time labor leader and valued friend, was quick to point out that union labor and the I. W. W. had nothing in common.

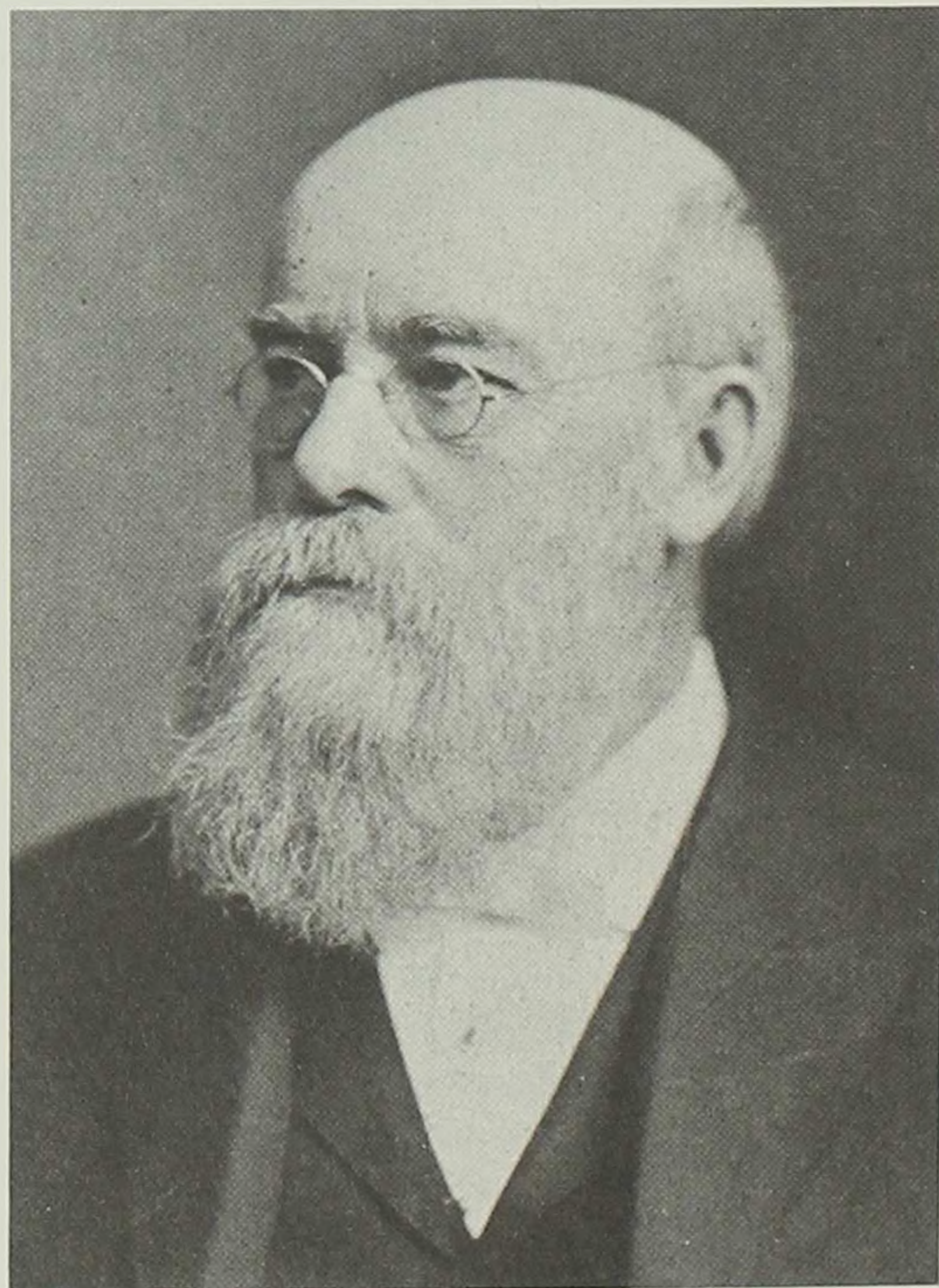
Under these circumstances, a recall committee was organized in the fall of 1918. The committee made an effort to woo union labor away from its support of the mayor and to secure the necessary number of signatures for a recall election. Many of the newspapers in the surrounding communities joined in the growing chorus calling for repudiation of the controversial mayor. The *Manson Democrat* believed it

would be hard for Sioux City "to hold up her head with such a fine specimen of Bolsheviki for the head of municipal affairs." The *Odebolt Chronicle* called Short a sensationalist who loved to play to the grandstand, and the *Storm Lake Pilot-Tribune* thought Sioux City was already "reaping some of the inevitable harvest" caused by electing such a man as mayor. However, the *Carroll Herald* felt Short was giving Sioux City an honest and capable administration and that he had been fighting the "emissaries of evil throughout his career."

When Mayor Short returned from Chicago on July 18, he moved quickly to stem the rebellion against his administration, charging that he had been misjudged and misinterpreted. In an address at Riverside Park, Short in-

Born in Pennsylvania in 1836, Congregational minister Washington Gladden was a leading exponent of the "social gospel." In books and sermons, Gladden advocated the Christianization of society through direct application of the basic Christian teaching, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." He urged fellow clergymen to join him in the quest for social justice and in the active pursuit of improved economic security for America's working men and women. Gladden wasn't a socialist, but he did favor some types of government ownership. He also championed the idea of cooperation between businessmen and laborers, and believed that workers had a right to organize unions.

Pastor of the First Congregation Church of Columbus, Ohio for nearly forty years, Gladden frequently lectured to university audiences and wrote dozens of books on a variety of religious and social topics. He died in Columbus in 1918. (photo courtesy Mrs. Robert Hunter)



Washington Gladden

sisted that he had never defended the I. W. W. or their doctrines where they were subversive of good order. Rather, he had struggled to bring the organization into harmony with the "just practice and theory of good government." He felt he had been elected mayor because the people had believed him sincere in his profession of human brotherhood. He told his audience that "prejudice and bigotry are only augmented when opposed by prejudice and bigotry," but they may be assuaged or eradicated in the "presence of a fair and just spirit." Those in prison for a just cause "are still human and have a right to be treated as humans." The true patriot would keep before him the true spirit of democracy which, the mayor proclaimed, "is nothing more than the true spirit of brotherhood."

The ultimate refusal of the Trades and Labor Assembly to support the recall petition, the effectiveness of the mayor's defense, and the influenza outbreak which hit Sioux City in late September weakened the recall effort. Although there was an attempt to link the high incidence of flu and mortality in the city with the alleged incompetence of the mayor, newspaper accounts of the epidemic, Board of Health reports, and insurance mortality figures indicate that Sioux City's mortality rate was no greater than that of other urban areas in the state.

A renewal of the recall effort came in April 1919, when Mayor Short once again got involved with the I. W. W. Agricultural Workers Union #400 announced that its spring convention would be held in Sioux City during April. The coming of the I. W. W. convention created a new wave of hysteria among many Sioux Citians, who were opposed to any event which was likely to bring a large number of Wobblies into the city. When use of the city auditorium was denied them, the I. W. W. decided to hold their public meetings on the street and use the I. W. W. hall at Fourth and Jennings Street for their convention.

Disregarding the advice of labor unions, city, county, and federal officials and businessmen, Mayor Short accepted an invitation to address the convention, extended by James Kelly, local secretary of the I. W. W. The *Sioux City Journal* protested that the "city does not welcome this aggregation of tramps, criminals and near criminals against which the United States government is waging a war of repression. . . . If possible, the mayor should be stopped from bringing further disgrace and ignominy upon the community." Should he persist in sullyng the city's reputation, the *Journal* advocated separation from his office "if that course is possible."

County Sheriff W. H. Jones was appalled by the mayor's actions and annoyed that some people in the community believed that he was himself in accord with the mayor. Jones asserted that the I. W. W. supported devastation of property, private sabotage, murder, and lesser crimes. He added, however, that the I. W. W. would be unable to run Sioux City "even with the mayor's support." The city council and the labor unions were also shocked by the mayor's decision to address the convention, but Short maintained that he was addressing the I. W. W. just as he might address the Knights of Pythias and he could not understand why he was the object of so much criticism. His critics pointed out that as mayor he spoke for the city and could not separate himself from his official position. The mayor's determination to appear before the convention gave his opponents the *cause célèbre* they had been waiting for.

Years later, Short recalled that on the day of the convention he walked to the hall accompanied by a single policeman. It seemed to him that he had not a friend in the world and that the people of Sioux City were watching to see "whether I would stand without faltering." A business meeting was in progress in the

The Speech the Daily Press Would Not Print

(Both papers had in their office the first half of the speech in manuscript, and had their reporters present to take the second half which was spoken without manuscript, but was taken down by a stenographer.)

SPEECH OF WALLACE M. SHORT

(Mayor of Sioux City, Iowa.)

At the I. W. W. Hall, April 21, 1919.

Gentlemen: The next day after your secretary suggested to me that I would be welcome here for a talk this morning, I dictated and had written out a couple of pages which I hold in my hand. I am going to read this, and then after I have read it I shall perhaps say a few words off-hand.

(HERE FOLLOWS WHAT WAS READ FROM MANUSCRIPT.)

I speak to you today simply as an American citizen, and as one who has always felt a keen and sympathetic interest in every sort of human problem.

Sioux City is the center of a great agricultural region. During the last three and one-half weeks the United States employment agent at the City Building has had requests for 692 farm hands, and has actually placed 252 men in farm jobs. He tells me that the demands from now on during

America is a democracy in the making. It is as yet a very imperfect democracy. But it has gone so much farther in the line of democracy than any other of the great nations of the earth, that the vast majority of the American people believe we are going forward by orderly and constitutional methods toward a yet more perfect democracy.

I believe there are certain fundamental principles that are established in the minds of the American people, so firmly established that order and progress in America are more secure than anywhere else on the face of the earth.

I believe that the true American holds that the highest achievement of true Americanism is a happy home and family supported by the products of honest toil. I am just an average American, with a little plot of ground 6 by 9 rods where vegetables and flowers and trees grow and birds sing and children laugh and play and where the house

of righteousness. There are other men who need it.

In my department at the city hall there is the pure food administration. Now I believe that if there is any duty that organized society owes to its members, it is to see to it that the man who would reap unrighteous profit by adulterating and poisoning the food you and I must eat, and that our children must live upon, is restrained. And yet I know that when we catch a man poisoning the food our families must eat, if he is a large advertiser in the papers we cannot get a line in the papers to advertise his crime. And he does not care much for a hundred dollars fine we levy upon him. But the little sinner is sure to get plenty of publicity.

I just mention these things to show you I know these things. I might stand here for a day and a night and tell things like that.

Well, what is a man to do? Am I to start down the street and beat up somebody, and let the mat-

THE FIGHT IS ON

ADDRESS BY WALLACE M. SHORT

at Labor Mass Meeting, April 28, 1919

The fight is on. It is going to be a good fight. We are ready for it.

A year ago a certain coterie of men, who have always in Sioux City been of the rule-or-ruin sort, fought the candidates of the people by every method in their power, except that of honest discussion. Then they boasted they would never allow the mayor on the winning ticket to serve out his term of office.

So they have watched for every opportunity to kindle prejudice and passion and division among the supporters of the administration, hoping at some moment before next election to catch the people off their guard long enough to pull off a recall.

The greater part of the time during the last year, these men have kept the rumors of recall flying from mouth to mouth and in the press. At both the Liberty Loans that have occurred within the last twelve months they have had the superlative impudence to press up to the doors of the polling places, on the days consecrated by the federal government exclusively to patriotic purposes, and thrust their recall petitions in people's faces as the subscribers have entered and departed from the booths.

But they have not yet had the courage to try out their strength in a recall petition. We now challenge them to the issue. All they have to do is to throw down the gauntlet by filing a legally sufficient recall petition. It must be an honest petition. That is all we shall ask.

day my mail brings words of confidence from men in every part of America, and reminders that I must stand firm for the sake of millions who of themselves can do nothing unless men here and there are willing to take the brunt of the battle for fair play and a square deal. For their sakes I must accept my part in the good fight. And I know I am not alone. I know the people are with me. And that fact warms a man's heart and nerves his arm.

Even the Tribune admits occasionally that I have some education, but laments the uses to which I put it.

I confess that I am a member of the Phi Beta Kappa society. But this honor was not purchased with money. It is bestowed only for scholarship of the first rank in college and university. After finishing the high school I spent eight consecutive years in study at Beloit College and Yale University. The scholarship rank which I obtained was won while paying my own way in college by the work of my own hands and head.

We are constantly told that college and university education is for the sake of citizenship. If my college and university training are of any value, what is that value? Is it merely that I may disport myself comfortably in some exclusive club or set? Most any man who wears a Phi Beta Kappa key can do that if he chooses to.

Or is that training, with whatever value it may hold, a possession that belongs not only to myself but to my fellow men, for the service of

really important processes, and the occasional emergency surgery is comparatively an incidental matter.

In other words, we must conduct our affairs in such way as to create in the minds of the vast part of our American public a sense of social and political health and confidence. If we do not, though we set the iron heel of prohibition upon the neck of radicalism, at the same time that we are frantically seeking to stem the rising power of revolution it will grow big, as it has done in every country where autocratic selfishness has been the method pursued.

Therefore, in dealing with the I. W. W. in Sioux City the Mayor made it perfectly clear in every utterance, public and private, that violence or the threat of violence would not be tolerated for a moment. He said this to the members of the I. W. W. in every possible way both directly and indirectly. His speech to the members of the I. W. W. on April 21st is printed complete from the written manuscript and the stenographic report and may be had by anyone for the asking. In that speech the Mayor told the members of the I. W. W. that a certain revolutionary paper entitled, "The Rebel Worker" could not be circulated in Sioux City. Two days later some individual was found on the street selling copies of it. That individual is lying over in the Sioux City jail.

But at the same time that members of the I. W. W. were prohibited from circulating incendiary literature, and a government stenogra-

Handbills carried Mayor Short's speeches to Sioux Citizens unable to hear them in person (SHSI)

I.W.W. hall when the mayor arrived and he waited outside until called. The *Journal* reported that no applause greeted his entrance and that "no word was said as he walked the length of the room and mounted the platform with a manuscript in his hand."

Including government agents and reporters there were fewer than sixty people who heard the mayor's speech. And there was nothing inflammatory in the speech. Though sympathetic and conciliatory, it contained stern warnings that violence would not be tolerated in Sioux City. Short refused to permit the circulation of an I.W.W. pamphlet, "The Rebel Worker," which he considered incendiary, and urged the delegates to rid themselves of the "idea of violence," and endeavor to "rid the public of the idea that you are trying to take the world by violence." Even so, while upholding America as a democracy, he acknowledged that it was an imperfect democracy, and told the delegates that if they were the only sinners in society, "I might possibly throw a stone at you and nothing else." Still disapproving, however, the *Des Moines Register* reported that the mayor's address mildly reproached the I.W.W. for their "Bolshevistic principles" and then launched into a "tirade against the enemies of the I.W.W."

That Mayor Short had spoken before the I.W.W. convention gave his opponents a potent new basis for renewal of their recall effort. One contemporary of Short's in Sioux City recalls that the "higher-ups felt Short was a Red." Charges of radicalism were to remain with him the rest of his life. Many people in Sioux City genuinely feared the I.W.W. and felt their mayor had invited hordes of organized bums into the city. They did not feel that it was an issue involving civil rights.

The mayor's appearance before the convention unleashed a new storm of journalistic rage. The Marshalltown *Times-Republican* referred to the notoriety of the "unfrosted preacher" and hoped that other communities might profit

from Sioux City's calamity. John Kelly, editor of the *Tribune* and one of Short's bitterest enemies, was satisfied that labor would support the recall, which it saw as a way to redeem the city. The press as well as the leaders of the business community would shun Sioux City and locate elsewhere. It appeared to the *Journal* that the actions of the mayor were harmful to union labor which had "just reached the point (where) it could stand shoulder to shoulder with capital." Somehow, the good name of the city—its businesses, its workers, its people—had been vilified by a mayor who, one critic asserted, was the "prime minister of the I.W.W."

Mayor Short was mistaken if he believed his appearance before the convention would enhance community tolerance of the organization. Sheriff W.H. Jones ignored the mayor's wishes and, assisted by 150 deputy sheriffs, raided Wobbly headquarters at Fourth and Jennings, padlocked the door, and closed the hall. Less than a score of Wobblies were present and the raiders—armed in expectation—encountered no trouble. United States Marshall Milton Perry Smith seized the records of the convention and confiscated whatever literature was in the hall. Sheriff Jones maintained that his actions were prompted by fear of mob violence, and the I.W.W. leaders were told that if their meeting was held, several hundred vigilantes would storm the hall. Although the I.W.W. men boasted they would hold their meetings in spite of the warnings, they soon began to make their exodus from Sioux City. Mayor Short acknowledged that his effort to uphold what he considered the constitutional rights of the dissidents had failed. He advised I.W.W. leader James Kelly that there was "nothing to be gained for Sioux City nor for any person in Sioux City by aggravating the state of public feeling that now exists." The mayor's conclusion appears to have been that the state of public passion had reached such a point that the convention would not peacefully continue.

Confrontation between the I.W.W. and irate local citizens was a possibility, but the rapid departure of the I.W.W. during the next few days was further indication that the organization did not seek to achieve its revolutionary goals by violent means.

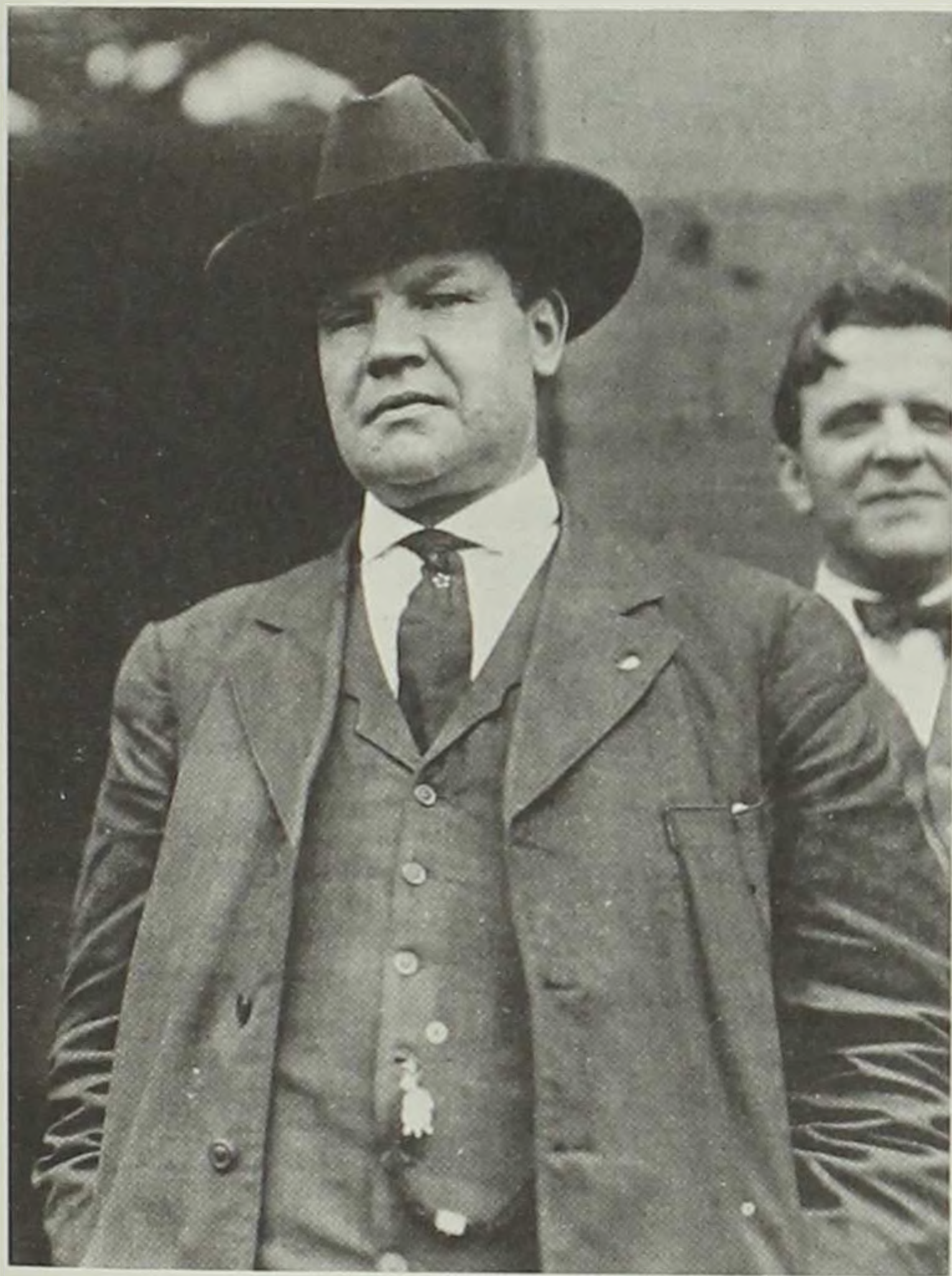
Short was hardly upholding the cause of revolution. He thought that the authorities should make it clear that "revolutionary violence and the threat of violence are un-American and undemocratic and will be suppressed promptly wherever they show their head." He acknowledged, however, that the laws and principles of democracy must be administered fairly. When an American Legion commander protested the mayor's permissive attitude, Short asked him whether he had taken an oath to obey the constitution. When the commander answered in the affirmative, Short asserted that the constitution binds everyone "to protect even small minorities in their rights of freedom of speech and assembly." Short's position was that Wobblies should have the same rights of freedom of speech and assembly as others as long as they obeyed the law. There must be assurance "that there is one law for rich and poor, wise and ignorant—that what we send James Kelly, secretary of the I.W.W. to hail for, John Kelly, editor of the *Tribune*, shall not be allowed to do with impunity. . . ."

Short's stand was a call for reason and justice, and a courageous position at a time when war-stirred emotions demanded the suppression and sometimes brutal treatment of dissenters. He knew that if the I.W.W. was treated in a rational manner it would pose no threat to the tranquility of Sioux City—that tolerance was the best safety valve the city could have. The public hysteria that resulted from the meetings of the Wobblies had been fanned by the press and by opposition forces hostile to the mayor's liberal approach in matters of municipal government.

Attacks quickly focused on the mayor. E.J. Stason, who headed the city council's planning committee, organized a recall committee at the West Hotel the day after the convention address. C.F. Lytle and Andy Jackson, businessmen, John Kelly, editor of the *Tribune*, and Carleton Toy, banker, also appear to have been active in the recall movement. Sioux City's clergy supported the movement, and one of the most vocal was Rev. Mr. Charles E. Tower, Short's successor at First Congregational Church. The pastor of the Russian Orthodox Church claimed that workers on the East Side had been subjected to Bolshevik propaganda and that many had quit their jobs in anticipation of the revolution which they believed would give them everything they wanted. E.J. Stason accused Short of trying to create a class war and urged the city to unite to drive out the Bolsheviks and the I.W.W.

Ironically, the text of the mayor's speech was only sketchily reported and did not appear in full detail until June 1919, when it was printed and circulated by his supporters. The *Journal* then printed the text of the speech on June 6. Meanwhile, the mayor received numerous threats, one menacing, stating that he ought to be tarred and feathered, painted yellow, and thrown in the Missouri River unless he left town.

The recall committee sought the support of labor leaders as well as that of business and professional people. Every effort was made to get union labor to repudiate the mayor. The mayor's enemies claimed that a bitter fight was transpiring in labor circles over Short's radical activities. E.J. Stason found that packinghouse employees in the stockyards were falling in line better than anticipated. Petitions for Short's removal were presented to people during the victory bond drive—so close to where the bonds were being sold that the chairman of the bond drive, though stating he favored the recall, felt it necessary to force the petitioners to withdraw. By April 29, the recall committee



William Dudley Haywood's turbulent career as a labor organizer took him from the silver mines of Idaho to the inner sanctum of the Kremlin. A strapping six-footer, "Big Bill" was

born in Salt Lake City in 1869 and went to work in the western mines at age fifteen. News of Chicago's Haymarket riot of 1886 aroused his interest in the labor question; a dozen years later he had risen to the executive board of the Western Federation of Miners. An aggressive, outspoken advocate of industrial unionism—as opposed to the more conservative trade unionism of Samuel Gompers' AFL—Haywood presided at the organizing convention of the I.W.W., held in Chicago in 1905.

In many ways, Haywood personified the Wobblies: rough-cast, dedicated to workers' rights, and constantly harassed by government agencies, he spent the years 1906-1921 in and out of courtrooms. Convicted of sedition in 1918, Haywood and 94 other Wobblies received sentences of twenty years. Haywood applied for a new trial, posted bond, and upon his release quietly left the United States. He arrived in Moscow to a warm reception from the new Bolshevik government, whose leaders welcomed him as a fellow revolutionary. For the next seven years, Haywood worked on his memoirs and gave occasional speeches. He died in Russia in 1928. (Culver Pictures)

Big Bill Haywood

claimed it had 4,437 signatures.

Mayor Short fought back on April 28 with a stirring speech before the Sioux City Trades and Labor Assembly in which he vigorously defended himself and attacked "those little coteries of men who are determined to rule their town or ruin it, determined to control for selfish ends their country or destroy it." On May Day, a meeting with delegates from 37 unions was held at the Trades and Labor Assembly and the mayor received a unanimous endorsement. Still the recall committee had obtained sufficient signatures to force an election. The mayor announced that he "welcomed the fight." He challenged E. J. Stason to meet

him in a joint debate, asserting he had a right to know the accusations and to meet his accusers face to face.

The recall committee not only disdained facing the mayor in debate, but had difficulty finding an opponent to face him in the election. Desiring the support of union labor they settled upon a railroad engineer, Hugh T. Carney, as their candidate. A committee was established to help Carney conduct the campaign, and the *Journal* described the engineer as "the most popular man in Sioux City." Carney was no match for the sharp, urbane mayor, who had been a champion debater during his college days and who was far more used to public

speaking than was his inarticulate opponent. During the early days of the campaign it appears that Carney seldom gave public addresses, preferring private meetings among small groups of voters. Ten days before the election Carney did begin to give public addresses, though, in which he admitted his lack of eloquence. But then, said Carney, oratory "was often used for purposes of deception."

Short summed up his convictions on May 20, when he addressed the state convention of the Iowa Federation of Labor at the Sioux City auditorium. The mayor told his audience that the nation's capitalists were "working night and day to incite the spirit of hysteria and mob violence." He denounced the tactics of Mayor Ole Hanson of Seattle, who had made himself a national hero by demanding the suppression of the I.W.W. Selfish interests, Short asserted, would have us believe that "revolution lurks on every street corner." There was not enough revolutionary spirit in Sioux City, Short told the convention, to "create even a respectable symptom of danger." The real danger came from the selfish interests which had played upon the "imagination and kindled the fears of men and women through false reports and lying journalism." True patriotism, Short said, was found in the honest men and women who

"respected the rights of others."

During the heated recall campaign the mayor was castigated for signing the saloon consent petition while pastor of the First Congregation Church, for an alleged lack of true Americanism, and for his defense of the I.W.W. both in Chicago and in Sioux City. The *Journal* felt that Wallace Short had given Sioux City the national reputation of an I.W.W. town. The real issue of the campaign was that Short had made it appear that the I.W.W. was welcome in Sioux City. What he said at the convention—and the *Journal* acknowledged that he had said nothing particularly offensive—was not important. The point was that the mayor of the city had addressed the I.W.W. Indeed, the *Journal* insisted, under such circumstances the Sermon on the Mount would have been as objectionable to the people of Sioux City. Now the people of Sioux City had the opportunity to decide "if they want to be further misrepresented in the mayor's office by Mr. Short."

Short's victory on election day was a shock and disappointment to his enemies. The mayor's attack on his opposition and his presentation of the campaign as a battle of the few against the common people carried the day. Labor was solidly behind the mayor and he outdistanced Carney in the voting 5,709 to 3,747. Carney was able to carry only four of fifteen voting precincts; his weakness as a candidate contributed to the mayor's margin of victory. Smarting from his defeat, Carney said the real issues of the campaign, patriotism and the American form of government, were lost amidst the personal abuse heaped upon certain individuals. "I gave Sioux City the opportunity it seemed to want," Carney said, "and it failed to take advantage of it." A *Journal* editorial said the issue had been clear and unequivocal, and there could be no dodging the consequences. The election showed that a "majority

Note on Sources

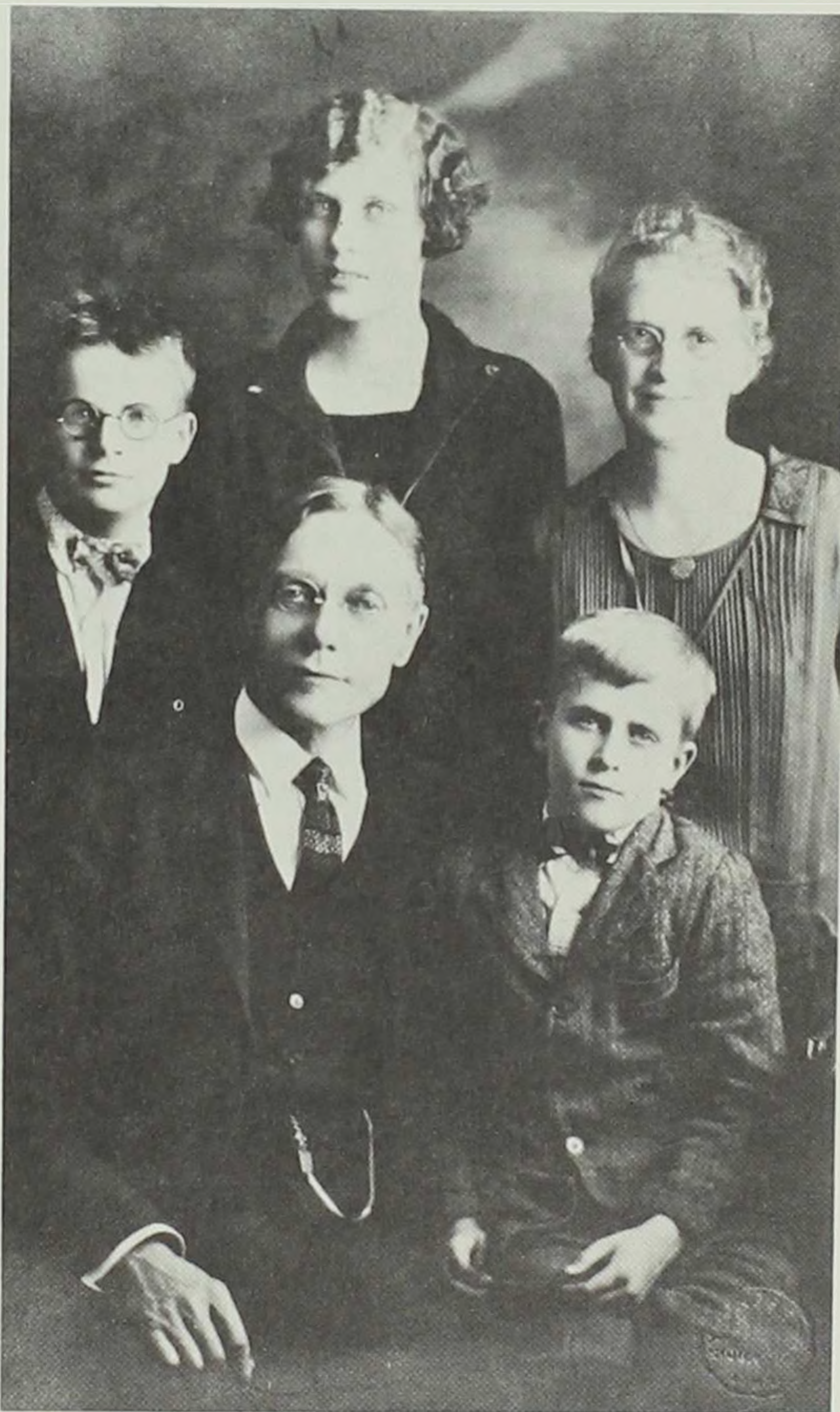
Materials used in preparation of this article include Philip Taft, "Mayor Short and the I.W.W. Agricultural Workers," *Labor History* (Spring 1966), 173; Avery L. Carlson, "The Recall of Sioux City Iowa," *National Municipal Review*, November, 1920, 669; and Wallace Short's own "How One Town Learned a Lesson in Free Speech," *Survey*, October 30, 1915, 107. Issues of the *Sioux City Journal* and *Des Moines Register* were examined as were Mrs. Wallace Short's *Just One American* (privately published, 1943) and Harrison George's *Mass Violence in America, The I.W.W. Trial* (New York: Arno Press, 1969). Also helpful were resources at the Sioux City Public Library; material loaned to the author by Mrs. Robert Hunter, daughter of Wallace Short; and copies of Short's speeches. Oral interviews and correspondence with Ralph Sturgeon, Tom McHale, and Dr. E. H. Sibley provided further information about Short.

An annotated version of this article is on file at the State Historical Society of Iowa.

of the people are in favor of the municipal regime that has brought upon the city the stigma of sympathy for the I.W.W." Meanwhile, Mayor Short thanked his supporters and informed Sioux City that he had "no wounds to nurse and no revenge to wreak."

The cause of the antagonism toward Mayor Short went beyond his speech before the I.W.W. convention. Some irritations undoubtedly lingered from his opposition to prohibition while at First Church, an issue still alive since the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919. In addition, a social gospel minister without business training seemed unlikely to provide the hard-headed business administration which merchants and professionals in Sioux City desired. A reformist "golden rule" ticket was not universally popular in what some felt to have been a wide-open town. A faction in Sioux City also opposed the commission form of government which Short favored. As the labor candidate, Short had been able to provide his followers with effective leadership and wide appeal, but to Sioux City's business and professional classes in a turbulent and unsettled period, he represented the unknown. Support of union influence and the championing of labor's bargaining rights still seemed radical. Mayor Short appointed representatives of labor and other groups to the city's industrial planning committee, which he felt had been dominated by special interests, and many middle and upper middle class Sioux Citians felt such tactics were disruptive and contributed to class divisions.

While the cries of radicals were shrill, most people realized that Short was more of an idealist who sought to extend social justice than a radical who wanted to change the form of American society. Sioux City had a large labor population, and was an ethnically diverse city of Scandinavian, German, and Irish elements with a small but visible black community. In 1915 the foreign-born population consisted of 12,536 of the city's 62,000 inhabitants. Eigh-



Wallace Short with his wife and family, including sons Burton and John and daughter Emily (courtesy Mrs. Robert Hunter)

teen thousand more were of foreign or mixed parentage. To these people Mayor Short made a difference, and they carried him to victory in four elections between 1918 and 1924. It is interesting to note that the mayor's opponents, who resorted to strident cries of un-Americanism, who charged the mayor with betraying union labor, and who sought to split labor ranks with a union labor candidate of their own, were unable to dent the ranks of the labor movement in Sioux City. A majority of Sioux Citians could tolerate the I.W.W. without resorting to the extreme measures of com-

munities on the West Coast. Union laborers in Sioux City were hostile to the I.W.W. and questioned Short's tolerant attitude, especially his willingness to address the Wobbly convention, but they recognized that he was trying to change the I.W.W.—not the structure of American society—and that as a champion of the rights of labor, he was their best hope for political leadership in the community.

Wallace Short was a combative man and his six years as mayor of Sioux City were turbulent ones. It was a period of nationwide labor unrest, from which Sioux City was not exempt—a packinghouse strike in 1921 would pose a new challenge to Mayor Short's leadership. When the Ku Klux Klan emerged in Sioux City politics (as it did in other Iowa communities), Short opposed the secrecy and the bigotry of that organization. His administration endeavored to combat unemployment, promote public works, and encourage civic improvement. Afterward, Short never ceased

being proud of his years as mayor, and regarded his labor administration as the most constructive in the city's history.

His career did not end with the completion of his third term in 1924 and his subsequent defeat in an attempt to win the Republican nomination for Congress later that year. He campaigned on behalf of Robert La Follette's presidential bid in 1924, tried unsuccessfully to regain the mayoralty in 1926, served a term in the Iowa legislature of 1930-32, was closely associated with Milo Reno's Farm Holiday movement during the 1930s, was one of the founders of Iowa's small Farmer-Labor Party, and edited a labor paper—*The Unionist and Public Forum*—which he founded in 1927.

Still, no aspect of Short's career overshadows his championing the rights of free speech and assembly for a small group of radicals whom the mob passions of the day would have circumscribed. His counsel of moderation and reason and his willingness to defend the civil rights of a hated minority stand in stark contrast to those of many of his contemporaries. □

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